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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2017
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: P-1 REFERRAL: DIGAEVA, STELLA ARBIEVNA

Classified By: Charge Daniel A. Russell. Reasons 1.4 (b and d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Post has identified Russian citizen Stella Digaeva as a candidate for resettlement in the United States as a Priority One referral. Digaeva is in danger of retaliation by Chechen security forces over criticism of Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov through the U.S.-based Amina.com website her son Albert Digaev operates. Digaeva told us that since November 2006, security officers have been searching for her throughout Chechnya, visiting her former apartment and her relatives, seeking information on her whereabouts. She fled to Moscow in May, but believes that she is not safe in Russia given the intensity of the efforts to find her. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Digaeva said that she has been threatened repeatedly since May 2005 over the activities of her son Albert and his website Amina.com. Digaev, who has received asylum in the U.S. and not lived in Chechnya since 1994, has created Amina as a forum for Chechens to gather on line and debate Chechnya's recent history and its current situation. Digaev has also written critically about Ramzan Kadyrov, accusing him of violating human rights and of subverting Chechen culture and traditions.

¶3. (C) Digaeva said that she has received various warnings and threats about her son's activities, but these were anonymous and indirect. Since November 2006, however, these threats have become more serious and direct. In January, armed men came to the Grozny apartment where she was registered, but not living, demanding to know where she was. In April, a man and a woman in civilian clothes came to the apartment again asking about her and about Albert, asking where he lived and his phone number. Digaeva's cousin who lived in the apartment avoided giving them any information.

¶4. (C) At about the same time, Digaeva's cousin in the village of Tolstoy-Yurt was visited several times by armed men in camouflage uniforms seeking Digaeva. Another relative of hers, a colonel in the Chechen Ministry of Internal Affairs, passed information to her that Kadyrov had ordered that she and any other relatives of Digaev's be found.

¶5. (C) In May, armed men arrived at the apartment where Digaeva lived in Grozny. She was not there, but her relative who owned the apartment was questioned about calls and text messages from the United States to a mobile phone (Digaeva's) listed at that address. Digaeva said that the messages had come from Albert and were warnings to leave Chechnya because he had also received information that Kadyrov had ordered his relatives to be arrested in retaliation for his criticism. At about this same time, Albert had received death threats that he believed were serious enough that he reported them to the FBI, according to Digaeva and a copy of a statement he gave to FBI agents.

¶6. (C) On May 11, Digaeva fled Chechnya and came to Moscow, where she is temporarily living with a friend. She does not

believe she is safe, however. Digaeva said that all her immediate family has fled Russia, and that she could not be safe anywhere in Russia if her whereabouts became known to Chechen security forces.

RECOMMENDATION

¶7. (C) Memorial and other human rights organizations have reported repeatedly on Chechen security forces taking relatives of their targets hostage in order to pressure them to surrender. Digaeva said she believes she would be taken in order to force Albert to close down his website. We find her claim credible, in light of the specific information she provided about the persistent efforts security forces are making to find her and critical articles about Kadyrov that have been posted on Amina.com. We request Department to accept this referral.

¶8. (U) Biographic information is as follows:

Name: Digaeva, Stella Arbievna

DPOB: 02 May 1954, Kazakhstan

Digaeva has a valid Russian international passport.
RUSSELL